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EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF RURAL YOUTH.

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THE AUTHOR DISCUSSES THE PRESENT STATUS OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND NEEDS OF RURAL YOUTH. EVIDENCE INDICATES THAT MOST RURAL YOUTH DO NOT PLAN TO ATTEND COLLEGE, AND THAT THESE NONCOLLEGE BOUND STUDENTS DO NOT SCORE AS WELL ON APTITUDE AND ACHIEVEMENT TESTS AS THOSE PLANNING ON COLLEGE. APPROXIMATELY 80 PERCENT OF THESE STUDENTS DO NOT FEEL THEY WOULD BE PREPARED FOR EMPLOYMENT UPON LEAVING HIGH SCHOOL. THE AUTHOR CONCLUDES THAT SUBSTANTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF EXTENSION EDUCATION PROGRAMS COULD PROVIDE THE NECESSARY POST-HIGH SCHOOL TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR SKILLED AND TECHNICAL EMPLOYMENT. THE ARTICLE IS A REPRINT FROM THE "JOURNAL OF COOPERATIVE EXTENSION," SPRING 1965. (JM)

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Educational Needs of Rural Youth

Rural youth planning on college have more help in making their decisions than those not planning on college

D. E. LINDSTROM

THE EDUCATION of rural youth with no plans for college should be an important concern of county Extension staffs and their supervisors, as well as those responsible for evaluational studies and preparation of education and occupational guidance materials. This article focuses on information that can be used by Extension personnel and lay leaders in building programs for non-college-bound rural youth, emphasizing choice of educational programs, preparation for decision making as to choice of occupation, and for related occupations—whether these be in farm and home, agriculture related, or other occupations. Results of research conducted in Illinois will provide the primary basis for this discussion. However, other research findings are incorporated.

Nine out of ten farm and non-farm rural youth graduating from high school must find jobs outside of farming.[1] Sixty per cent of all rural graduates do not plan on college; 80 to 90 per cent of these are not ready to take a job. These youth score significantly lower on academic tests. They do not react as do college-bound youth to certain personality tests. It follows that serious concern must be given to post-high school education attuned to capabilities, personality characteristics, and interests. Few rural communities provide for such guidance and training: It must not only be vocational and technical but socio-cultural and "life adjustment" training.

Farm technology has advanced phenomenally, and will continue to do so. This means that fewer jobs will be open in farming for rural youth; from 1955 to 1965 about 12 thousand fewer farmers

[1] Edward W. Aiton, "Myth and Myopia—Blocks to Progress," *Extension Service Review* (August, 1963), p. 140.

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and farm laborers were needed in Illinois alone—a decrease of almost 15 per cent. In the country as a whole the decrease was higher (about 17 per cent).[2] Workers coming from rural to urban areas have to take lower prestige and poorer paying jobs because they are less well educated than their urban cousins.[3]

Rural Youth Are Disadvantaged

Rural youth can't get as good jobs as urban youth. This is partly true because they come from areas of small school districts, low population density, and relatively low income; these have produced a quality of education which by many available standards is less adequate than that provided by urban systems.[4] To put it bluntly, rural schools generally are poorer than urban schools.

A big part of the problem is that many rural youth do not stay in school, and even more do not go on to college. "Over half of the rural farm males 16 to 24 years of age in the civilian labor force in 1959 not enrolled in school failed to graduate from high school; 61 per cent of the farm residents lacked a high school education."[5] A high school education was at one time considered adequate for nonfarm employment. Increasingly, employers are requiring even more advanced education: technical, artisan, skilled, professional. Without training beyond high school many who find employment soon fail and must look for other jobs. "School leavers" are particularly vulnerable.[6]

The best way to prepare for a job, it is said, is to go to college. The program of most rural high schools is designed primarily to prepare students for college. Yet 60 per cent of the rural youth in Illinois (and equally high percentages in other parts of the country)[7] do not plan on college.[8] This is significant in view of the fact that youth reared in rural areas have less success in the urban labor market than urban-reared youth.[9]

[2] William P. McLure, *et al., Vocational and Technical Education in Illinois* (Urbana: Bureau of Educational Research, College of Education, University of Illinois, 1960), p. 13.

[3] E. J. Moore, E. L. Baum, and R. B. Glasgow, *Economic Factors Influencing Education Attainments and Aspirations of Farm Youth,* Agricultural Economic Report No. 51, ERS, Resource Development Economics Division, USDA, April, 1964, p. 1.

[4] *Ibid.,* p. vii.

[5] James E. Cowhig, "Early Occupational Status as Related to Education and Residence," *Journal of Rural Sociology,* XXVII (March, 1962), 18.

[6] Moore, *et al., op. cit.,* p. 11.

[7] *Ibid.,* p. 12.

[8] D. E. Lindstrom, "Educational and Vocational Needs of Rural Youth: A Pilot Study," *Illinois Agricultural Economics,* IV (July, 1964), 11-12.

[9] Moore, *et al., op. cit.,* p. 1.

A three-part study in Illinois was designed to point up educational needs of rural youth not planning on college. The first was a pilot study in Sullivan, Illinois, including all juniors and seniors in that new community unit system. The second was an analysis of capability tests taken from the *Illinois High School Testing Program* (on 2326 juniors and seniors in 24 high schools in 8 widely scattered counties) to see if there are differences in the scores of those who plan to go to college and those who do not. The third extends the pilot study to all the schools in the eight counties geographically distributed over the state.

The problems facing rural youth in these eight counties are almost as acute as those in the country as a whole. Of the 2326 young people, more farm (63 per cent) than non-farm (58 per cent) did not plan on going to college (Table 1). It is farm youth, especially, who need additional training, because so few can go into farming. Here Extension is in position to help!

Not Ready to Take Jobs

Eighty to 90 per cent of the rural youth in the Sullivan high school, not planning on college, said they did not feel prepared to take a job; both boys (90 per cent) and girls (80 per cent) reported they need more preparation and training.[10] Since they do not plan to go to college they must seek other than college training or go to work unprepared. The sad fact is that very little is available to these unprepared youth in rural areas. This is the case, also, for the 25

Table 1. Percentage of 2326 juniors and seniors in rural high schools in eight Illinois counties planning or not planning to go to college, 1962–63.

Category	Planning to go to college	Not planning to go to college
All youth (n=2326)	40.4	59.6
Males (n=1196)	46.7	53.3
Females (n=1130)	33.7	66.3
Farm (n=607)	36.8	63.2
Non-farm (n=1719)	41.7	58.3
Farm males (n=310)	42.6	57.4
Non-farm males (n=886)	48.2	51.8
Farm females (n=297)	30.6	69.4
Non-farm females (n=830)	34.9	65.1

[10] In the study reported by Moore, *et al. (Ibid.,* p. 14), 90 per cent of all farm male seniors and 93 per cent of all farm female seniors indicated interest in continuing their education.

per cent of youth in Illinois schools who drop out before finishing high school.[11]

Yet rural youth want to live in the country or in the rural community; this was the case for three out of four of the juniors and seniors enrolled in the Sullivan high school. Although more than 75 per cent prefer the country or small town, only three per cent of the boys and none of the girls would choose farming as their occupation.

Jobs are available in rural areas, but youth need further training to be prepared for these jobs. This is shown by a recent Illinois study.[12] In East Central Illinois, business firms in population centers of less than 25,000 (employing 1282 technicians) reported they would need 528 in the next five years due to business growth and 328 in the next 12 months due to business growth and employee turnover. But almost all jobs would require some post-high school education.

Education Needed

Post-high school education needed by rural youth not planning on college should be different from that for those planning on college. This is indicated in the study on differences in scores on tests given to 2326 rural youth. Tests included were on abstract reasoning, verbal reasoning, intelligence, natural and social science reading, writing, and functional and conventional errors in writing. Tests of significant differences were computed. The most marked statistically significant[13] differences were between those who plan to go to college and those who do not. With few exceptions, there were no such differences between farm and non-farm and male and female. It was on the basis of *decision with respect to going to college* that differences occurred—and with respect to all eight tests.

Possible Reasons for Differences

The influence of parents and the job they hold is doubtless one cause for these differences. Fathers of non-farm rural youth who plan to go to college are more likely in professional, technical, and

[11] David M. Jackson and William M. Rogge, *Identification of Potential High School Dropouts* (Springfield, Illinois: Office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1963).

[12] Lloyd J. Phipps, *et al.*, *Technical Education in and for Rural Areas*, Preliminary Report No. 1 (Urbana: Vocational and Technical Education Department, College of Education, University of Illinois, June, 1964), chapter iv.

[13] Significant at the .001 level using the "t" test.

managerial occupations. Those whose fathers are in the lower-scale occupations are, in highest percentages, those who do not plan on college (Table 2).

The occupations rural youth hope to enter have even more influence.[14] Over half (55 per cent) of the farm boys planning on college hope to enter professional, technical, or managerial occupations; over half (52 per cent) of those not so planning want to farm. Even higher percentages of non-farm boys (80 per cent) and both farm (86 per cent) and non-farm girls (80 per cent) planning on college hope to go into professional, technical, or managerial occupations. More than two-thirds of all classes of rural youth not planning on college hope to go into sales, service, agriculture, homemaking, or skilled and unskilled occupations (20 per cent of the non-farm males look only to unskilled jobs). See Table 3.

Differences in personalities of rural youth have an influence on decision making regarding occupation. The Sullivan, Illinois, study showed that youth deciding on college were more enthusiastic and talkative, more sensitive and self-sufficient, and more resourceful than those planning not to go.[15] Other studies relating specifically to farm youth showed those with high non-farm occupational aspirations were more stable emotionally, had more confidence in their ability to work with others and mix socially, tended more to achieve success in activities, and were more willing to act independently and assert their ideas or feelings of self-confidence than others.[16]

Table 2. Occupation of fathers of 1196 male juniors and seniors in rural high schools in eight Illinois counties according to those planning and those not planning on going to college, 1962–63, in percentage of total.

Category	Planning to go to college		Not planning to go to college	
	Farm males	Non-farm males	Farm males	Non-farm males
	n=132	n=427	n=178	n=459
Professional, semi-professional, and managerial	2.3	27.7	0.0	14.0
Clerical, sales, service, and agriculture	96.1	19.8	100.0	15.6
Skilled and semi-skilled	.8	47.0	0.0	62.1
Others (including unskilled)	.8	5.4	0.0	8.3

[14] For additional information on this point see Lee G. Burchinal, *et al., Career Choices of Rural Youth in a Changing Society,* AES Station Bulletin 458 (St. Paul: University of Minnesota, November, 1964), p. 16.

[15] See Lindstrom, *op. cit.,* p. 15.

[16] See also Burchinal, *op. cit.,* p. 18.

What do rural youth want to become? Boys planning on college attach greater importance to "status and prestige" than do boys who do not plan to go, according to the Sullivan study. They also assign greater importance to "opportunity to be boss" than do boys not college bound. Rural youth planning on college have more help in making decisions than do those not planning on college. About 43 per cent of the boys planning on college discussed careers (life work) and 51 per cent discussed jobs (what to do after graduation) with parents and relatives. Only 21 and 34 per cent respectively of boys without college plans did this.

The Sullivan study also showed fewer girls than boys discussed occupations with their parents. The percentage of girls discussing *careers* were highest for those planning on college; but a higher per cent (47) of non-college-bound girls than college-bound girls (42 per cent) discussed *jobs* with parents. More college-bound boys discussed both careers and jobs with the school counsellor than those not planning on college. But a higher percentage (36) of non-college-bound girls than college-bound girls (33 per cent) went to the counsellor to discuss both jobs and careers; and more of these girls (36 per cent) went to the counsellor than to parents or relatives (25 per cent) to discuss careers. But no percentage for girls was higher than 47; the majority did not seek counselling aid at all. For boys the highest percentage was 51.

Table 3. Occupation student hopes to enter among 2326 juniors and seniors of rural high schools of eight Illinois counties, 1962–63, in percentage of total.

Occupation	Planning to go to college				Not planning to go to college			
	Farm		Non-farm		Farm		Non-farm	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Professional, technical, and managerial	55.3	85.7	80.1	80.0	16.9	25.6	27.6	26.0
Clerical, sales, and service	4.5	14.3	6.3	17.6	4.5	67.0	11.6	65.0
Agriculture	33.4	0.0	3.7	0.7	52.2	0.0	6.7	0.0
Homemaking	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	4.9	0.4	5.2
Skilled and semi-skilled	3.8	0.0	5.9	0.0	18.0	0.5	33.8	0.6
Unskilled and other*	3.0	0.0	4.0	1.0	8.4	1.9	19.8	3.2

* Includes armed services.

Lack of finances and lack of education seemed to keep almost two-thirds of the boys and one-third to two-fifths of the girls from choosing what they wanted to do—which for most was to get more education. Liking to work with people as against working with things made a difference between college-bound and non-college-bound boys: 64 per cent of the former liked working with people and ideas; 65 per cent of the latter liked working with machinery and 7 per cent with livestock.

Choice of favorite subjects in school revealed significant differences between the college-bound and the non-college-bound. Less than 29 per cent of the college-bound farm boys like manual subjects best, whereas 58 per cent of the non-college-bound farm boys favor manual subjects, and 48.5 per cent of the non-college-bound non-farm boys and 43 per cent of this same class of girls favor business courses (Table 4).

SUMMARY

The Illinois studies, backed in several respects by others, tell some important things:

1. Most farm and non-farm rural youth do not plan to go to college. This decision was made by 60 per cent of 2326 juniors and

Table 4. Favorite subject in school for 2326 juniors and seniors in rural high schools in eight Illinois counties, 1962–63, in percentage of total.

Favorite Subject*	Planning to go to college				Not planning to go to college			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Farm	Non-farm	Farm	Non-farm	Farm	Non-farm	Farm	Non-farm
Physical, biological, and social sciences	30.3	17.6	44.7	26.9	17.4	19.0	29.5	18.6
English, mathematics, foreign languages, and music	37.9	54.9	39.1	47.6	17.4	23.4	27.2	25.2
Business	3.0	15.4	3.8	17.2	7.3	48.5	12.0	42.9
Manual work and physical education	28.8	12.1	11.9	8.3	57.9	8.7	29.0	12.3

* "Don't know" not included.

seniors in 24 high schools in 8 widely scattered counties of Illinois. Other studies have shown that this is the case for rural youth in the United States as a whole.

2. Rural youth not planning on college do not score as high on academic tests as do those planning on college. This is true for all classes: farm and non-farm boys and girls.
3. Most (80 to 90 per cent) non-college-bound rural youth want further education and training. Moreover, eight or nine in ten want to live in the country or small town. Yet only one in ten can hope to find jobs in farming. Jobs are available in rural communities but they require, for the most part, post-high school education.

Among reasons which may be assessed for the differences between rural youth planning on college and those not so planning are (1) the occupations of parents, (2) aspirations of the youth, (3) personality characteristics, (4) extent of help in decision making by parents, relatives, school counselors, and teachers, and (5) other factors such as lack of finances and personal likes and dislikes (i.e., working with people and ideas as against working with things, and favorite subjects in school).

Implications

Do Extension workers have a responsibility for the 8 out of 10 farm and non-farm rural youth who cannot go into farming? Should they be concerned about the future of the two-thirds of the high school graduates who do not plan to go to college? In view of the fact that Extension workers have gradually extended their services to the rural non-farm and some urban youth, most Extension personnel have already assumed such responsibility.

The first concern of Extension workers, then, should be for helping rural youth make sound decisions as to future occupations and places to live. This is especially important for those youth not planning to go to college. To do this, Extension workers must be as well prepared as possible to do counseling.

Providing counseling and guidance means, on the one hand, having knowledge of the competence, personality characteristics, interests, hopes, and desires of youth. Most rural youth, as shown by the Illinois studies, do not get this kind of guidance either from the parents and relatives or at school. Extension workers in their contacts with rural youth can help fill this gap. Possession of technical knowledge is not enough. If the Extension worker wishes to do youth counseling--which involves not only decision making regarding jobs but also education on adjustments to new social (life

and work) situations—more adequate professional training in social science is needed.

The other side of counseling is related to information about jobs. This is a rapidly changing situation and requires concern for the post-high school education of rural youth. Because Extension workers have broader contacts than most parents of rural youth, education beyond high school becomes a matter of parent education: Parents need help in counseling their young people about decisions regarding additional training.

Extension people need to be concerned, also, for what educational opportunities beyond high school are available to the rural youth not planning on college. They should know where it is available and what it is like. If there are no such facilities, then Extension workers should cooperate with other educators and citizens in providing such opportunities. Illinois is in the process of working for a state-wide system of junior colleges where broad-gauge training can be secured.[17] Such plans are either completed or in the making in many other states. The interests of farmers and rural non-farm people should be generated in such movements, especially regarding what types of educational and training programs are to be provided, how accessible the schools will be, and how they are to be financed. Such schools must be available in easily reached centers, within commuting distance of the majority of rural youth, and providing training suited to his capabilities and interests.

Broad education means more than vocational training and liberal arts. It must include education not only in skills (including re-education for those whose jobs are outmoded) but concern for values, attitudes, life adjustment, and working with people. People must be educated to regard any job as important if it contributes to the wealth and well-being of our society. Extension personnel, who regard farming and farm homemaking in this way, are in excellent position to help provide this kind of education.

[17] See *A Master Plan for Higher Education in Illinois* (Springfield: Illinois Board of Higher Education, State of Illinois, July, 1964).

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